Add to previous memos on What does the CIA really do, it, State, NSC tec. 8/23/91

While neither the Washington Post nor any other repoting I've seen or heard has characterized the fact that the failed conservative coup in the USSR was a major US intelligence failure, todays Post has an intelligence cover-the-ass story headed, "U.S. Aids Saw Coup Unravelling." It begins, "Shortly before midnight last Sunday one of the CIA's most experienced Soviet analysts raced back to hid office from home, switched on his computer terminal and urgently began searching the previous 72 hours of intelligence data for tell-take warning signs of the move against...Gorbachev that had just been announced in Moscow."

This confirms my instant analysis of a major intelligence failure in that the CIA (and not it alone) had not followed the abundant indications over a period of many months that such a move was possible, had not taken note of the clear prediction of it as recently as three days earlier by high-ranking USSR officials, and had failed to realize what was obvious, that the scheduled Tuesday signing of the agreement granting the individual states some form of sovereignity and greater freedom could be a trigger for reactionaries inside the USSR of a means to prevent that.

There is a half-assed apology/explanation by these two experienced Post reporters: people on vacation. As when Saddam invaded Kuwait, also in August.

My quotation from the story's lead is a shcoker to me. It gets to the question I asked from the first, what does the CIA really do. If any competent intelligence analysts has to search his computer to learn what he had received during the previous three days, he does not keep much of what is important in mind.

Moreover, the CIA (and others) did not need proof that a coup was in the works to have been able to ~~provide~~ inform top policy makes, particularly the President and Secretary of State and others, that conditions for a coup existed and that the political situation indicted that one was possible. This, not covert actions, is the essence of traditional intelligence, a requirement of necessary, sensible intelligence, a basic function of it.

Moreover, the CIA (and not it alone) had abundant indication that there ~~could be a~~ was an imminent coup. It is in the Post story as another explanation. The story states that on Monday, the day after the coup, after Bush returned to the White House from the vacation (that he soon resumed), the CIA did brief him: "U.S. intligence had a closes watch on Gorbachev's vaction home along the Black Sea and could observe that it was surrounded by troops and an usual array of ships stationed offshore."

Whether or not the presence of these troops was observed earlier, it is not possible that the "array" of an "unusual" number of ships could have been placed there without time taken for it and their movements being picked up by the ~~staellites~~ satellites. There is no other reasonable explanation for this than the coming of a coup. Of this possibility without any question Bush and others should have been informed.

As I believe I've noted this also represents a radical reorientation of U.S. intelligence from traditional and in the modern workd ever more essential basics into political purpose, especially for the political purposes of the President. (At least as long as they coincide with the CIA's own policies that it does pursue contrary to its denials.)

The traditional intelligence analyses included appraisal of possible changes within other countries and what they could mean for the U.S. in particular and the world in general.

There should have been many detailed analyses of the consequecnes of the many attempted secessions from the USSR, especially but not limited to the Baltic states. What should have been included, in addition to the possibilities and probabilities, is whether or not they could be both independent and viable and whether or not these and/or other secessions could have a major impact on the USSR and its viability and whether or not the consequences of secessions could have any impact on the U.S. and its allies.

Major considerations would be political and economic consequences and they would exist.

Perhaps above all, would secessions mean instability of any kind inside the USSR and if so, what the potentials could be.

Instability if not chaos is likely, perhaps certain. If Bush was informed of this, as cold warriors might not be inclined toward, it is not reflected in what he is saying. Just yesterday again he campaigned for the secession of the Baltic states, as he has recently for the Ukraine and I'm sure in the recent past has for other states. Rhis serves only domestic political (re-election) purposes and it does that at the possible cost of great international problems if not dangers.

It was not at all necessary for Bush to address this in the context of the coup and its failure It was a dabger to the world. He should have received cautions, perhap did and ignored them, but there is no indication he was informed, as if intelligence today was as it has been traditionally, he would have been.

I note in passing that as the CIA assuredly knows, these states seeking to seceed, the Baltic states and the Ukraine, were largely pro-Nazi and provided a rather large (for their size) number of war criminals, particularly for what they did in the concentartation and death camps.

Hw